

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1480
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

The Causes of the World War

Harry Elmer Barnes

**HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS
GIRARD, KANSAS**

Copyright,
Haldeman-Julius Company

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE CAUSES OF THE WORLD WAR

I. LEVELS OR TYPES OF RESPONSIBILITY

In generalizing about responsibility for the World War it is necessary to be specific as to just what is meant by this term "responsibility." There are some Revisionists* who contend that all of the Great Powers involved were about equally responsible. There are others who state that France, Russia and Serbia were the only leading powers in 1914 who desired a European war and that they worked cleverly to bring it on the least possible appearance of aggression. Both of these opinions would be correct if one clarifies what is meant. Those who argue for equal responsibility in this sense usually mean that, in regard to the causes of wars in general in Europe from 1870 to 1914, all the Great Powers were about equally responsible for the *war system*. They do not refer primarily to the crisis of 1914, but rather to the situation lying back of the July clash. Those who contend for the primary guilt of France, Russia and Serbia have in mind the responsibility for unnecessarily forcing the Austro-Serbian dispute of 1914 into a general European conflict. Therefore, it is necessary to know just what one implies when he says that everybody was guilty or that this or that group of nations was guilty.

The best authorities on the question of responsibility for the World War contend that we must examine the problem on at least four levels: (1) those causes of war in general

*i. e. Scholars who take into consideration the documents published since 1918.

which made war possible if not inevitable in 1914; (2) the diplomatic history of Europe from 1870-1912; (3) the diplomatic revolution of 1912-1914; and (4) the crisis of June 28th to August 5th, 1914. We shall briefly review the situation up to 1914 in this book and later take up in another book the crisis of June 28th to August 5th, 1914.

II. THE CAUSES OF WARS IN GENERAL

By the causes of wars in general we mean those divers aspects of the European international system in the half century before the War which predisposed Europe to war whenever a crisis of sufficient proportions arose. As characteristic of this state of affairs making for war in times of international tension, one would naturally list such things as the super-patriotic national state, the cult of war, racial and national arrogance, the growth of great armaments, secret diplomacy, the struggle for raw materials and markets, the system of differential and discriminatory tariffs, population pressure, the doctrine of absolute national sovereignty, the conception of national honor, opposition to international organization and arbitration—in short, the whole complex factors which led to what Professor G. Lowes Dickinson has well described as “the international anarchy” which prevailed throughout Europe in 1914.

When we consider such causes of war as the general factors listed above, it must be frankly admitted that all parties involved in the War were about equally guilty. They were all a part of the *system*, and if one had a larger army than his neighbor, the neighbor was

likely to have a larger navy. If one was more patriotic, another was pushed ahead more inexorably by economic forces. If one (say France) pursued a more clever program of international duplicity through secret diplomacy, another (say Germany) disturbed the peace more by startling frankness in international behavior. Therefore, it cannot be held that, as far as general causes of war are concerned, any one European state or group of powers was uniquely at fault.

During the War the Entente asserted and reiterated that Germany was, beyond comparison, the chief representative of the war system in Europe; that, for example, she had a larger army and navy than any other state, was more given to enthusiastic reading of the prophets of war, like Nietzsche and Bernhardi, whose names were on the tongue of every German household, and was dominated in her foreign policy by the bellicose and arrogant Pan-German League, which desired German dominion throughout the world. Let us look into the facts in regard to the above Entente indictment of Germany.

The chief French authority on military history, General Buat, has shown that on July 1, 1914, before a soldier had been called to the colors because of the crisis of that year, the active French army numbered 910,000 with 1,250,000 reservists, while the active German army at this time numbered 870,000 with 1,180,000 reservists. The Russian army lacked little of being twice as large as the German. The British navy was almost twice as large as the German, while the combined British, Russian, and French navies made the German-Austrian naval combination appear almost insignificant.

Of course, numbers do not mean efficiency, but they are the test of the existence and degree of armament, and the Entente contended that Germany far surpassed any other nation in the world in 1914 in the extent of her armaments. The fact that the Germans proved the most efficient soldiers once war broke out does not alter the case in any respect. The French army was as well prepared for war in general as the German, and the Russian army was well prepared for a short war, which was what the Russians expected if they were joined by France, Great Britain and Serbia against Austria and Germany.

Likewise, with regard to the assertion of the worship of Nietzsche and Bernhardt by the German people, the contention receives no support from the facts. In the first place, patriotic writing in Germany easily can be matched by equal examples of jingoism in the other European states; for example, in the writings of Barrès and Déroulède in France, and of Kipling, Lea and Maxse in England, of D'Annunzio in Italy, and of the Pan-Slavists in Russia. In the second place, Nietzsche was in no sense an obsessed exponent of the Prussian military system. He hated the Prussian military oligarchy, and, as Professor Charles Andler, the foremost French authority on Nietzsche, has shown, he was by no means an indiscriminate eulogist of the war cult. As Andler says, "It is a mistake to continue to picture Nietzsche as the apologist of Saint Devastation." Yet, even if we conceded the worst things said about Nietzsche by the Entente propagandists during the World War, it cannot be shown that he had any appreciable influence upon either the German masses or the German officialdom before the War. He was vigorously anti-Christian in his

philosophy, and, hence, anathema to the majority of the Germans, especially the Prussian bureaucracy, who were loyal and pious Christians. No one could have been more repugnant to them than the prophet of the Anti-Christ. Nor was Bernhardi any more widely followed. He was not read by the masses, and the present writer ascertained that not a single person in the German Foreign Office in 1914 had ever read his book on *Germany and the Next War*. He was known only among the military clique who shared his views without any necessity of being converted to them by his books. Nor were his works terrifying to foreigners in the pre-War period. M. Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister in 1914, once admitted to a friend of the present writer that he had never heard of Bernhardi before the War.

During the War Americans were frequently warned by André Chéradame and other propagandists as to the dangerous nature of the Pan-German plot to annex the world. They were told that the German people and government were willingly in the grip of the Pan-German League and were eager abettors of its aggressive plans. The nature, activities and influences of the Pan-German League were made the subject of a learned study by Miss Mildred Wertheimer. She showed that it was constituted of a small group of noisy jingoes, who had no hold on the German government, which regarded them as a nuisance and an embarrassing handicap to German diplomacy. They could be matched by similar groups in any leading country in Europe, and had about as much influence on the Kaiser and Bethmann-Hollweg as the National Security League or the "preparedness" societies had on Wilson and Bryan in 1915. They were a blatant and

CAUSES OF THE WORLD WAR

aggressive group, but in no sense did they represent Germany and German opinion. It may be true that the German people accepted the military yoke somewhat more willingly than most other European citizens, but in 1914 the civil government in Germany retained control to the last and resolutely held out against war until all hope for peace was destroyed by the Russian general mobilization.

We may, therefore, contend with complete assurance that, with respect to the causes of war in general, the guilt was divided; in fact, about equally distributed. In holding Germany, along with England and Italy, as relatively guiltless in the crisis of 1914, we do not in any sense attempt to prove her innocence of her equal share in producing the system of international anarchy which made war probable whenever Europe faced a major diplomatic crisis. At the same time, it can no longer be asserted with any show of proof that she was uniquely black in her pre-War record.

III. EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY FROM 1870 TO 1912

Some may express surprise that the diplomatic history since 1870 is here divided into two sections: (1) 1870 to 1912; and (2) 1912 to 1914. Why should we not treat it as a single unit from 1870 to 1914? The answer is to be found in the fact that down to 1912 the European system of alliances and the European diplomacy were ostensibly, at least, devoted to the preservation of the balance of power and the maintenance of peace. Between 1912 and 1914, however, Russia and France, through their agents, Izvolski and Poincaré, abandoned this order of things and laid plans to exploit

an appropriate European crisis in such a manner as either to humiliate the Central Powers or to provoke a war which would bring to Russia the Straits and a warm water port on the Black Sea, and to France the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. They also endeavored, with success, to get England so involved with the Franco-Russian Alliance that she would be bound to come in on the side of France and Russia in the event of a European war. Therefore, we have to draw a dividing line in European diplomacy at 1912, while fully realizing that the break was not sharp and that the policy which Izvolski brought to fruition in 1914 was begun by him as early as 1908.

In the diplomatic history from 1870 to 1912 the developments and episodes of greatest moment were: (1) the genesis of the two great alliances—the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente; (2) the French desire to recover Alsace-Lorraine; (3) the diplomatic clashes over the Near East and Morocco; (4) the superficial and somewhat hypocritical effort of the nations to secure disarmament and arbitration at the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907; and (5) the development of Anglo-German naval rivalry, especially after 1908.

The Triple Alliance was negotiated by Bismarck between 1878 and 1882, and brought Germany, Austria and Italy together in a defensive alliance, designed primarily to frustrate a French war of revenge. Italy was included at the solicitation of the Italian authorities. Bismarck also secured benevolent relations with Russia through a reinsurance treaty made in 1884 and renewed in 1887. After Bismarck's retirement in 1890 the Kaiser abandoned the Russian link and turned to England as the

CAUSES OF THE WORLD WAR

chief country for Germany to cultivate outside the Triple Alliance. The French were on the alert and quickly picked up Russia. They had successfully negotiated a defensive military alliance by 1893. When England and Germany failed to draw together between 1898 and 1903, because of the inadequacy of the British offers and the opposition of Baron Holstein, the French made a bid for English friendship. By 1904 they had succeeded in forming an Anglo-French agreement. Indeed, they even created a Triple Entente in 1907 through promoting an understanding between England and Russia, and successfully tested British support in the second Morocco crisis of 1911, when England took a more bellicose stand than either France or Germany.

The two great counter-alliances were unquestionably organized primarily to preserve the peace of Europe. Bismarck formed the Triple Alliance to prevent France from fomenting a war of revenge, and Grey perfected the Triple Entente to preserve the balance of power, whatever may have been in the back of the heads of Theophile Delcassé and Paul Cambon, who led the English safely into the alliance. Yet, in due time, the counter-alliance became a menace to Europe, because either group of powers would hesitate to back down in a serious crisis for fear of losing prestige. Further, as we shall show later, Izvolski and Poincaré were successful in 1912 in transforming the purpose of the Triple Entente from a defensive and pacific organization into one which was preparing for a European war and was arming itself so as to be ready when the anticipated crisis arose. As between the two camps, it must be held that after 1911 the Triple Entente was much the greater danger to Europe: (1)

because the Triple Alliance was going to pieces on account of the secret Italian withdrawal in 1902 and because of Austro-German friction over Serbia in 1912-1913; and (2) because from 1912 to 1914 the Triple Entente was being transformed into a firm and potentially bellicose association, as we have just indicated above.

At the close of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 the Germans had annexed the two former German provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, which had been added to France by Louis XIV. and other French monarchs. It proved an unwise move for Germany, as the French never ceased to hope for their recovery. France could scarcely hold Prussia responsible for the War of 1870, for even the Revanchard, Clemenceau, has admitted that "in 1870 Napoleon III., in a moment of folly declared war on Germany without even having the excuse of military preparedness. No true Frenchman has ever hesitated to admit that the wrongs of that day were committed by our side." But the German annexations at the close of the War in 1871, whether just or not, aroused a French aspiration for a war of revenge and laid the basis for the diplomatic maneuvers which ultimately led Europe to war in 1914. As Dr. Ewart well states it: "Alsace-Lorraine was the cause of the maze of military combinations and counter-combinations which had perplexed European diplomats for over forty years . . . Not France only, but all Europe, kept in mind, between 1871 and 1914, with varying intensity, the prospect—one might say the assumed certainty—of the recurrence of the Franco-Prussian War."

Since the time of the reign of Catherine the Great, Russia has desired a warm water port

to assure her free and unimpeded transport for her commercial products and her war vessels. She had attempted to secure access through the Straits as a motivating incident of the Crimean War and of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, but was blocked by Great Britain and other European powers. Russia next turned to the Far East and sought a warm water port on the Pacific after the building of the trans-Siberian railroad. She secured this in Port Arthur, but was driven out of this commercial and naval base as a result of her defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. She then returned to the Near East and the Straits, which were now all the more desirable, as Russia had, in 1907, come to terms with her old rival, Great Britain, who controlled the outlet from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. The Russian Foreign Minister, Alexander Izvolski, first tried diplomacy. He sounded out Great Britain in 1904-1906 without avail. He proposed in 1908 that the Austrians should annex two south Serb provinces, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in return for which Austria was to support the Russian demand for the Straits.* Austria agreed and annexed the two provinces, but England blocked the Russian plan in regard to the Straits. Izvolski, usually bankrupt, did not dare openly to criticize England, as he was then being supported in part by gifts from Sir Arthur Nicolson, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, so he violently attacked Austria and denied previous knowledge or approval of the annexation plan.

*The author secured positive proof from Count Berchtold in the summer of 1927 that the negotiations leading to the Buchlau Conference of 1908 were initiated by Izvolski.

Izvol'ski next turned to Turkey, and in the fall of 1911 Russia made Turkey an offer of a defensive alliance if she would open the Straits to Russian vessels. Turkey was then somewhat under the domination of the Germans and did not dare to accept this attractive offer of Russian protection against the Balkan states. A most significant aspect of the diplomacy of Izvol'ski in 1908 and 1911 was that, on both occasions, he was prepared to sacrifice the interests of the Slavic states of the Balkans when Russia stood to gain by such action, whereas, in 1914, Russia set forth as the justification of her measures which brought on the War the contention that she was bound by honor, tradition and precedent to act as the protector of her Slavic kinsmen in the Balkans.

After the failure of his Balkan diplomacy, Izvol'ski became convinced that the Straits could only be obtained by a war. Therefore, he decided to see if he could not get them by a local war rather than by a European war, provided peace could be maintained on the larger scale. He organized the Balkan League in 1912 and launched the Balkan States on a war against Turkey, hoping that the former would be victorious and that Russia could use her influence with them to secure the Straits. All went well until the Balkan states began fighting among themselves, when the plan of Izvol'ski was wrecked. He then became more than ever convinced that only a European war would bring Russia the Straits, and the Russian government agreed with him in this decision. Such was the state of affairs in the Near East at the outset of 1914.

In the Morocco crises of 1905 and 1911, Germany was in the right both morally and legally,

but her diplomatic methods left much to be desired with respect to tact and finesse. In 1905 she insisted that France should not be allowed to occupy northern Africa without taking the other European nations into consideration, and in 1911 she endeavored to prevent France from violating the Pact of Algeciras, which had been drawn up at the close of the first Morocco crisis. Incidentally, in the last Morocco crisis, Germany desired to break down the Anglo-French Alliance, but only made it firmer and more bellicose. Indeed, England seems to have been more eager for a test of arms in 1911 than either France or Germany. The writer possesses first-hand information that in 1911 the English urged Caillaux to adopt an attitude which would probably have led to war had he yielded to British advice. The most important result of the Second Morocco crisis was its effect upon internal French politics. The French jingoes attacked Caillaux for his pacific policies in 1911 and drove this great French statesman from power, supplanting him by the valiant and revengeful Poincaré. Had Caillaux remained in power, there is little probability that Izvolski could have brought France around to a warlike policy by 1914.

In the two Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 Germany made rather a worse showing than the other major European states by being more honest, frank and public about her attitude. She was no more opposed to land disarmament than France and no more averse to naval reduction than Great Britain, but she did not conceal her attitudes on these subjects from the public as carefully as did France and Great Britain, and made less hypocritical show of pacific intentions. To this degree Germany

was diplomatically less competent than the other states just mentioned. The Russian disarmament proposals were not made in good faith, as Count Witte later admitted. Further, Germany was as active as the other states in any arbitration plans of significance. Finally, it must be made clear that there were no plans seriously submitted at the Hague for the arbitration of any of the real causes of wars. Therefore, the common allegation that Germany at the Hague prevented Europe from putting an end to all wars a decade or more before 1914 is seen to be the most ridiculous nonsense. But her candor, in other words, her diplomatic stupidity, allowed her enemies to portray her with some success as the outstanding challenge to the peace of Europe.

One of the most persistent myths of the War period is the notion that Great Britain's naval increases after 1908 were due to the German naval program and were but a reluctant answer to the German challenge. Indeed, the present writer has been inclined to accept this version of the matter and included such an interpretation in his *Genesis of the World War*. In a notable article in the *Century Magazine* for January, 1928, Mr. Henry Kittredge Norton has completely demolished this contention and has shown that the British naval increases were due to the vicious chauvinism of Balfour and the British Tories, who were bent upon the destruction of Germany and were able to bulldoze the Liberal Government in England into the vast augmentation of the British naval construction project. It will be remembered that this was the same Mr. Balfour who was introduced to the American public in the early summer of 1917 as a dreamy, sweet-mannered and ascetic essayist, metaphysician and es-

thete who had reluctantly left his library and studio to devote his high talents to repulsing the enemies of human culture and decency. Mr. Norton summarizes the situation as follows:

The tragedy of the thing is apparent when it is evident that the real situation was known in England. Sir Edward Grey stated it frankly: "Our Navy estimates for 1909 are said to have given provocation. They have not given rise to increased naval expenditure in Germany, or, I believe, in any other country. The last addition to the German naval program was settled by law in 1908." And Mr. Churchill, now become First Lord of the Admiralty, added his testimony: "Next year the Naval Law . . . prescribes that the limit of expansion has been reached and that the annual quota of new ships added to the German navy will fall to half the quota of recent years. Hitherto that law, as fixed by the German Parliament, has not been in any way exceeded, and I gladly bear witness to the fact that the statements of the German ministers about it have been strictly borne out by events."

Here is the word of leading English statesmen that Germany had not only forced the pace in naval construction but had refused to follow the provocation of England, France and Russia when those countries under the spur of mendacious propaganda, had nearly trebled their expenditures. And yet it was the German "challenge to British naval supremacy" that reconciled the people of England to the orgy of slaughter and destruction which began in August, 1914.

Therefore, we may say that from 1870 to 1912 the responsibility for diplomatic arrangements likely to make for war was divided. On the whole, however, with the possible exception of England, Germany has the best record of any of the major states during this period. After a most careful examination of the *Grosse Politik* Professor Sidney Bradshaw Fay has

come to the following conclusions as to Germany and Europe from 1870 to 1912:

In the years 1871-1890 Bismarck's great aim was to preserve the peace of Europe. He did this successfully by a skillful system of alliances, in the interests of monarchical solidarity of the three Eastern Empires and the preservation of the *status quo* as fixed by the Peace of Frankfort. These alliances were all essentially defensive in form and character, except that in 1887 Italy extracted from Germany promises in regard to North Africa which were hardly defensive in purpose. Bismarck was able to achieve his aim of preserving peace, because he was always wise enough to have regard for the self-interests of his neighbors as well as of Germany.

After 1890 the formation of the Franco-Russian Alliance made a counter-weight to the Triple Alliance. This new coalition of powers, which had been Bismarck's nightmare, also tended at first toward the preservation of peace, because it was originally defensive in character and because it was no stronger than the Triple Alliance. It sufficiently balanced the Triple Alliance so that neither group of powers was markedly superior in strength to the other; therefore neither was a serious menace to the other, and neither cared or dared attack the other. This situation changed with England's decision to abandon splendid isolation. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's "alliance-feelers" to Germany at the turn of the century were coldly received by Count Bulow and the Kaiser, who were irritated at what seemed England's unwillingness to afford Germany colonial advantages in connection with Samoa, the Portuguese colonies, and China, and who judged that the international situation did not yet make it desirable for Germany to enter into an alliance with England. As it turned out, this was a fatal mistake on their part. Yet it is by no means certain than any real alliance with England could have been secured, even had they received the Chamberlain offers more cordially; because Chamberlain did not have full support of Lord Salisbury and the rest of the Cabinet; moreover, such alliance would only have been possible if Germany had

been willing to abandon the Tirpitz program for a large German navy; this was a concession which the Kaiser was unwilling to make.

After the rejection of the Chamberlain offers England turned to Japan and France, and made the Alliance of 1902 and the Entente of 1904. The latter, giving England a free hand in Egypt and France a free hand in Morocco, threatened the commercial interests and political rights of Germany in a matter in which she had not been consulted. As Holstein summed the matter up: "If we let our toes be trodden upon in Morocco without saying a word, we encourage others to do the same thing elsewhere." (*Grosse Politik*, XX, 209). Count Bulow's Morocco policy aimed to prevent this. Legally he had a good case, but politically he managed it badly, causing undying resentment in France, and leading the English to think he was trying to weaken or break up the newly-made Anglo-French Entente. This turned the first Morocco crisis into almost more of an Anglo-German than a Franco-German diplomatic conflict. It led directly to the military and naval "conversations" between England and France (and Belgium) which gradually ripened into bonds which had the practical effect (in spite of Sir Edward Grey's repeated reservations of a "free hand") of assuring the French of British armed support in case of a German aggression. Germany had no intention of making an aggression, but her growing navy and Agadir policy made England and France fear the contrary.

From 1907 to 1914 Europe tended to become more and more sharply divided into two opposing groups—Triple Alliance and Triple Entente. But there was no longer an equal balance between them. The Triple Alliance became relatively weaker, owing to Italy's dubious loyalty to her nominal allies, and owing to the dangers threatening to Austria from her internal difficulties and the nationalistic ambitions of her Balkan neighbors. But the Triple Entente tended to become relatively stronger and more closely united. Owing to English fear of the German navy, to Russian ambitions in the Balkans, and to French bitterness over Alsace-Lorraine and the Morocco crisis, it was

possible to tighten the bonds between England, Russia, and France by a series of military and naval arrangements and by closer diplomatic co-operation. In population, natural resources, naval forces, and perhaps even in military strength, the Triple Entente outmatched the Triple Alliance. Under these circumstances it was obviously to Germany's interest to preserve the peace, and she accordingly used her influence for this purpose in the region from which danger was most likely to come, namely, from a conflict between Austria and Russia over Balkan matters. In the Annexation Crisis of 1908-09 Germany helped find the solution which extricated Izvolski from the embarrassment into which he had brought himself by the Buchlau bargain and by Sir Edward Grey's refusal to assent to opening the Straits to the warships of Russia but not of the other Great Powers. In the Balkan Wars Germany's cooperation with England was decisive in preventing a general conflagration. While M. Poincaré had been inclined to push Russia forward in the rash policy of supporting Serbian ambitions, Germany had been inclined to restrain and moderate the claims of her Austrian ally. In the Liman von Sanders affair Germany, for the sake of peace, readily conceded a solution to satisfy Russia. While it is true that Germany, no less than all the other Great Powers, did some things which contributed to produce a situation which ultimately resulted in the World War, it is altogether false to say that she deliberately plotted to bring it about or was solely responsible for it. On the contrary, she worked more effectively than any other Great Power, except England, to avert it, not only in the last days of July, 1914, but also in the years immediately preceding.

IV. THE DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION:

1912-1914

In 1910, Izvolski, who had been Russian Foreign Minister since 1906, resigned to accept the position of Ambassador in Paris. This he did in part because of Russian criticism of the

failure of his plan to secure the Straits in 1908 and the Russian humiliation which followed, but chiefly because he believed that he could do more to forward the essential Franco-Russian diplomatic maneuvers in Paris than in St. Petersburg. During 1910-1911 he was unable to make much headway, as Caillaux and the friends of peace were in power in Paris and a pacifically inclined French Ambassador, Georges Louis, represented his country at St. Petersburg. In January, 1912, the Caillaux group was superseded by Poincaré and his supporters. This marked a momentous turning point in European international relations. These two able diplomats, Izvolski and Poincaré, had at heart goals which could only be realized by one and the same method and means, namely, a war on Germany. Izvolski admitted that "the road to Constantinople runs through Berlin," and Poincaré's life passion, as he himself admitted, was to recover Alsace-Lorraine, which could be achieved only by a victory over Germany. Poincaré once asserted in an address to university students:

In my years at school, my thought, bowed before the spectre of defeat, dwelt ceaselessly upon the frontier which the Treaty of Frankfort had imposed upon us, and when I descended from my metaphysical clouds I could discover no other reasons why my generation should go on living except for the hope of recovering our lost provinces.

This is a matter of great importance, for Poincaré and his group represented the first Republican *bloc* willing to go to war for Alsace and Lorraine. Hitherto, the active Revanchards had been, for the most part, Royalists and enemies of the Third Republic. Plenty of Republicans had hoped for the return of the provinces, but no party of them had been will-

ing to face the responsibility of waging a war to return them to France. The linking of the Straits and Alsace-Lorraine, as the common objects of France and Russia, once a European war broke out, had of course, been long taken for granted as the whole basis of the Franco-Russian Alliance. As early as 1910 Georges Louis, the French Ambassador in Russia, tells how, for many years, the Straits and Alsace-Lorraine had been inseparably connected in Franco-Russian diplomacy:

In the Alliance, Constantinople and the Straits form the counterpart of Alsace-Lorraine.

It is not specifically written down in any definite agreement, but it is the supreme goal of the Alliance which one takes for granted.

If the Russians open the question of the Straits with us, we must respond: "All right, when you aid us with respect to Alsace-Lorraine."

I have discovered the same idea in the correspondence of Hanotaux with Montebello.

Izvolski reported to his home government that he "felt like a new man" after his first conference with Poincaré, and, while the two men disliked each other personally and distrusted each other to some degree, they worked together cordially in diplomacy. Nothing which Poincaré has written in his apologetic memoirs (*Au Service de la France*) can challenge the assertion of the essential unanimity of the two men in regard to the basic aspirations of Franco-Russian diplomacy from 1912 to the outbreak of the World War.

The first practical step in their diplomacy was the completion of a naval treaty between France and Russia in July, 1912, the military union of the two states having been completed nearly twenty years before. In August, 1912, Poincaré visited St. Petersburg. There he

learned much more of the ambitious Russian plans in regard to the Straits and other territorial readjustments, and became convinced that France must cooperate enthusiastically if she was to gain her objectives in the dual arrangements. One of the most famous of contemporary French statesmen, in speaking to the present writer of Poincaré and Izvolski, not inaccurately compared them to Jesus and the Devil, the difference being that in 1912 Poincaré actually capitulated to the diabolical suggestions of Izvolski. It is the belief of some of the best historical students who have gone through the recently published Russian source-material that Poincaré's fall was chiefly due to this Russian visit in 1912. Before that he had only contemplated war as a future eventuality. After the return from St. Petersburg he came to regard it as an essential certainty, to be prepared for and chosen at the most advantageous moment; if possible, after the Franco-Russian plans had been completed. On November 17, 1912, Poincaré informed Izvolski that if a crisis broke out in the Balkans which brought Russia in against Austria, and Germany followed to protect Austria, then France would most certainly aid Russia and fulfill all the terms of the Franco-Russian Alliance. From then onward it was chiefly a matter of getting ready for the crisis.

November, 1912, was second in importance only to July, 1914, in witnessing events which helped on the World War. It was in this month that Poincaré pledged France to execute her full obligations to Russia in support of Russian diplomacy in the Balkans, that Grey pledged British naval, and by implication British military, support to France, and that Russia drew up her secret military protocol in

which she stated that when the crisis came diplomatic negotiations were to be employed to screen military preparations leading to war.

The Russian army had made a poor showing against the Japanese in 1905. Though something had been achieved between 1912 and 1914 to improve Russian military resources, the French believed that much further preparation was essential. Hence, the French made large loans to the Russians, on condition that they would be spent under French supervision chiefly for munitions of war and for strategic railroads to the German Frontier. The Russians also greatly increased the size of their army and the French reciprocated by enacting the Three Year Service Act, thus notably adding to the active French army.

In 1911-12 Izvolski had found French opinion generally opposed to having France enter a European war over the Balkans. Something had to be done about this if the French public was to support the diplomatic plans of Poincaré and Izvolski. Therefore, some of the French money loaned to Russia was sent back to be used by Izvolski in bribing the leading French papers to publish incendiary articles against Austria and Germany and to make it appear that it was to the interest of France to block all alleged Austro-German intrigues in the Balkans. Most of the greatest French papers were on the pay-roll of Izvolski, including the *Temps*, the leading Paris paper, as well as the organs of Millerand and Clemenceau. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of francs were dispensed in this way, Izvolski, ultimately putting the papers on a monthly payment basis and withdrawing the subvention if they failed to be useful. He wrote home to his government frequently, telling them of the success

of his campaign and asking for further funds. He told how, before the bribery campaign got under way, the French people were complaining about the danger of having France involved in Balkan controversies, but how, after the press campaign had been operating for some time, the French were impatient because the Russians were so complacent about Austria's threats against Serbia.

Izvol'ski even imported Russian gold to assist in the election of Poincaré to the French Presidency early in 1913. It was deemed wise to have Poincaré elected to the Presidency in order to give him official permanence. A French Prime Minister may be easily overthrown, but a President holds office for seven years, and a forceful man like Poincaré, by appointing weak Foreign Ministers, could direct French foreign policy as easily in the President's office as in the much more hazardous position of Prime Minister. In fact, Poincaré told Izvol'ski after his election to the Presidency that he proposed to be his own Foreign Minister in fact, and this he was right down through the outbreak of the World War.

In order to keep their plans moving smoothly it was desirable for Poincaré and Izvol'ski to have a sympathetic French Ambassador in St. Petersburg. M. Georges Louis, who held the office, was a member of the old Caillaux régime and was opposed to the bellicose schemes of Poincaré and Izvol'ski. Therefore, he was removed and replaced by M. Delcassé, a chief apostle of the war of revenge among the Republicans of France. Poincaré cleverly arranged it so that the Russians requested M. Louis' recall. With Delcassé and his successor, M. Paléologue, as the French Ambassadors in

St. Petersburg, there was no danger of opposition to the policies of Poincaré and Izvolski.

It was also necessary to convince M. Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, of the necessity of a European war to obtain the Straits. This was done: (1) by a ceaseless bombardment of letters written by Izvolski from Paris; (2) by Sazonov's consciousness that the Balkan Wars had proved futile as a means of obtaining the Straits for Russia; and (3) by Sazonov's resentment when, in 1913, a German general, Liman von Sanders, was sent to Constantinople to train the Turkish army. This was no worse than what had already existed, namely, that an English admiral was in charge of the Turkish navy, but England was supposed to be friendly with Russia. Hence, on December 8, 1913, Sazonov sent a famous memorandum to the Tsar stating that Russia could not tolerate any other nation in control of the Straits, that Russia must have the Straits, and that Russia could obtain the Straits only by a European war. Sazonov stated, however, that he desired to preserve the *status quo* until preparations were further advanced. On December 31, 1913, and February 8, 1914, the Russians held long and secret ministerial councils at which they carefully laid out the strategy to be followed when this war came. The Tsar approved the minutes of the councils in March, 1914. Incidentally, Sazonov mentioned the fact that English aid must be assured if France and Russia were to hope to crush Germany, though they could probably defeat Germany and Austria even if England did not intervene on the side of France and Russia.

It is quite true, as certain Russian writers have insisted, that the holding of these council meetings in 1913 and 1914 does not prove that

Russia was planning to provoke a war, but they do show that she was very seriously considering the prospect of a war which would not be started by an attack upon Russia. Moreover, we hesitate to think what Entente sympathizers like Professor Bernadotte Schmitt would have said if a record of similar council meetings of the German Cabinet in December, 1913, and February, 1914, had been uncovered, along with the Kaiser's blanket approval!

This brings us to the final scene in the dramatic revolution of European diplomacy from 1912-1914, namely, getting England so involved in the Franco-Russian net that she scarcely hesitated in the crisis of 1914. In 1911, through the Mansion House Speech of Lloyd George, the British government had lined up decisively with France against Germany and had done all it could to inspire in the British press an anti-German tone. But Caillaux and the German leaders were inclined towards peace and war was averted. In September, 1912, Sazonov visited London in behalf of an Anglo-Russian naval alliance. While he was not immediately successful in this, he received from the British hearty assurance of naval cooperation against Germany in the event of war and was told of a secret military engagement to help France if war broke out. In late November, 1912, Poincaré induced Sir Edward Grey to agree to an arrangement whereby the French fleet could be concentrated in the Mediterranean Sea while the British fleet could be relied upon to protect the French Channel ports. In 1912 also, Poincaré was able to frustrate a possible Anglo-German agreement growing out of Lord Haldane's visit to Germany. In April, 1914, the British King and Grey went to Paris and there Grey, with Izvolski and Poincaré laid the

basis for an Anglo-Russian naval alliance which was moving towards completion when the War broke out in August.

The fact that England and Germany seemed to be coming to an agreement over naval increases and over the Bagdad Railway project greatly alarmed the French and Russians early in 1914 and probably explains why they decided that the European war must be fought over the Austro-Serbian crisis of 1914, before England might slip away from the Triple Entente. France and Russia never felt absolutely certain of British support until August, 1914, but the recently published British Documents show that the British Foreign Office never had any doubts about its obligations to the Entente in the crisis of 1914 and made its decision to come in on the side of France and Russia with no reference whatever to the Belgian question. As Morel once remarked, the French and Russians had thoroughly "hooked" the British by the close of 1912, even if Izvol'ski and Poincaré did not thoroughly realize they had done so.

We have often had our attention called to the bellicose tone of the relatively non-influential Pan-German press and we have here pointed out the methods employed by Izvol'ski to buy the French press. There has not, however, been sufficient emphasis on the vicious influence of the Northcliffe press in England before the War as a factor in bringing a large section of the English people into a frame of mind favorable to the war policy by the time Grey decided to cast his lot with the war party in 1914. While Northcliffe was bringing the Tory public and the British mob around to his point of view, the imperialistic and nationalistic propaganda was being successfully spread among the

Liberals by Mr. J. Alfred Spender, editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, and the chief upholder of imperialism and Continental entanglements among the Liberal newspapermen of England.

In this way Izvolski and Poincaré transformed European diplomacy in the two years prior to 1914 and were ready for whatever crisis arose. They did not originally expect that 1914 would be the year of the decisive crisis which would bring on the European War. They had expected this to come at the death of Franz Joseph, which they believed would bring about a serious Austro-Balkan crisis. When the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in the summer of 1914, they decided, however, that the potential Anglo-German rapprochement was too dangerous to allow the test to be postponed, as England was known not to make wars for her health, and without British aid there was little hope that France and Russia could crush German and Austria.

Poincaré has denied the truth of this indictment which we have been able to formulate on the basis of the Izvolski correspondence, but he has been unable to bring forward any French documents that contradict Izvolski's general interpretation of affairs. Moreover, there is little probability that Izvolski would have dared to lie regarding matters of such vital concern for the foreign policy of his country and for his own diplomatic ambitions. Professor William L. Langer, the foremost American authority on pre-War Russian diplomacy, in reviewing the latest edition of the Izvolski correspondence, says in the *Political Science Quarterly* for December, 1927:

When all is said and done this correspondence still formulates the most serious indictment of

Franco-Russian pre-War policy and lends considerable color to the theory that there was a conspiracy against the peace of the world.

While the Triple Entente was being thus more firmly cemented and made aggressive in character, as far as the Franco-Russian nucleus was concerned, the Triple Alliance was disintegrating. Italy had made a secret agreement with France in 1902 to the effect that she would enter no war against France. Though the Germans counted on Italian aid in 1914, we know there was no chance of their obtaining such assistance. Then from 1912 to 1914 there was considerable friction between Germany and Austria over Serbia. The Austrians felt that Serbia must be punished in order to stop Russo-Serbian intrigues in the Balkans. The Kaiser, however, under the influence of the pro-Serbian German Minister in Belgrade, Baron von Griesinger, opposed the imminent Austrian aggression and twice prevented an Austrian offensive against Serbia. Heinrich Kanner, a disgruntled enemy of the old regime in Austria, together with Bernadotte Schmitt, have claimed to find in the memoirs of Conrad von Hötzendorf, the former Austrian Chief of Staff, evidence of a dark Austro-German war plot secretly laid in 1909 and executed in 1914, but Professor Fay, Count Montgelas and others have shown that there is no factual foundation whatever for this Schmitt-Kanner myth.

V. THE EVE OF THE WORLD WAR

In the first half of 1914 many developments were taking place which were likely to make any crisis in that year pregnant with the probability of a European war. The Anglo-German agreement greatly worried the French and Russians and made them feel that delay with the

European war was dangerous. The Tory gang in England was favorable to a European war, as it would be likely to stop the menacing social reforms of the Liberal Party in England, particularly the proposed land reforms, and also would make it more difficult to enforce the Irish Home Rule Act. The Northcliffe press was bellowing for war against Germany, partly because of its Tory sympathies and partly because a war was good for newspapers. Russia had decided that she must have the Straits and could only obtain them by a European war. She held two long ministerial councils in December, 1913, and February, 1914, to decide on the proper strategy for the war. In March, 1914, General Danilov congratulated Russia on her readiness for the impending conflict and in June General Suckhomlinov, the Russian War Minister, boasted that Russia was ready for war and that France must also be ready. This was done in part to silence the foes of the Three Year Service Act in France. In the spring of 1914 France had refused to allow the retirement into the reserves of the class normally entitled to leave active service that year, thus having four classes instead of two with the colors in July, 1914. The Tsar had received the Serbian Premier, M. Pasitsch, in January, 1914, had asked him how many men Serbia could put in the field when war came, promised his arms and ammunition from Russia, and told him to inform the Serbian King that Russia would do all in her power to aid Serbia.

In his memoirs Sir Edward Grey represents Russia as drifting into war because of lack of any decisive policy or leadership: "Perhaps it may be true to say, of Russia, that she was like a huge, unwieldy ship, which in time of agitation kept an uncertain course; not because

she was directed by malevolent intentions, but because the steering-gear was weak." It is interesting to compare Grey's view with Sazonov's sharp denial, embodied in his memorandum to the Tsar on December 8, 1913, telling him that Russia must have the Straits and, in all probability, could secure them only by war: "In considering the future and in impressing upon ourselves that the maintenance of peace, so much desired, will not always lie in our power, we are forced not to limit ourselves to the problems of today and tomorrow. This we must do in order to escape the reproach so often made of the Russian ship of state, namely, that it is at the mercy of the winds and drifts with the current, without a rudder capable of firmly directing her course." From the reports of the ministerial conferences of December 31, 1913, and February 8 1914, we can readily perceive that Sazonov had seized with determination the rudder fashioned by Izvolski and knew in what direction he was steering the Muscovite craft.

By January the plot to murder the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Austrian throne, was under consideration and in March it had taken definite form. In May it was perfected by high officers in the Serbian army, and high Russian military authorities approved of it and promised Russian aid in the event of an Austrian attack upon Serbia. N. Hartwig, the Russian Minister in Belgrade, was organizing a wide-spread Balkan intrigue against Austria, and the Austrians had captured many of his telegrams and had decoded them. This enabled the Austrian statesmen to know of the Russo-Balkan menace to the Dual Monarchy, and before the murder of the Archduke they had drawn up a memorandum

to be taken to Berlin, asking for German aid in thwarting the Russian intrigues in the Balkans. They particularly desired Germany to drop Rumania and to take on Bulgaria as the pivotal state for Austro-German diplomacy in the Balkans. Such was the state of affairs when the Archduke was shot down on the streets of Sarajevo in Bosnia on St. Vitus' Day, June 28, 1914.

In regard to this third level of war responsibility, then, that of diplomatic developments from 1912 to 1914, we may hold that the guilt is almost exclusively that of France and Russia among the major powers. The fourth level, namely, the crisis of June 28th to August 5th, 1914, we shall deal with in the book "Who Started the World War?" (No. 1542).

SELECTED REFERENCES

Brandenburg, E., From Bismarck to the World War.

Dickinson, G. L., The International Anarchy, 1904-1914.

Fay, S. B., The Origins of the World War, Vol. 1.

Gooch, G. P., Modern Europe, 1878-1920.

Stieve, F., Germany and Europe, 1890-1914.

Stieve, F., Isvolsky and the World War.